Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

METHODS OF EXTENSION TEACHING

H. W. Lochbaum

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service.....C. W. WARBURTON *Director*
Office of Cooperative Extension Work.....C. B. SMITH *Chief*
Washington, D. C.

METHODS OF EXTENSION TEACHING

A Brief Analysis and Outline of Procedure to Guide Extension Agents in Planning Work

H. W. Hochbaum,
Agriculturist, Eastern States,
Office of Cooperative Extension Work

Good extension teaching is dependent upon the following:

(1) A clear understanding of the responsibility of the extension agent as a teacher.

(2) A working knowledge of the principles of teaching and the factors which condition learning.

(3) Correct diagnosis of local situations.

(4) Determination of desired changes in practices.

(5) Service and supply in terms of material and equipment needed.

(6) Well-planned application of the principles of teaching so that desired changes may be brought about.

The extension agent is primarily a teacher - not a service agent. Therefore, he has a greater responsibility than that of extending subject-matter information. Good extension teaching definitely moves groups of people who have a common problem to improve their situations by adopting recommended practices. It is the agent's concern to find these problems, to determine economical solutions and sound practices, and to plan his teaching so that people will want to make the desired changes, and acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Effective extension teaching requires that the recommendations be reduced to the simplest form. The teaching should begin with practices, not principles, for the average man can not apply principles to improve situations. Likewise, it is better to teach single practices. People learn one thing at a time. Learning is a habit-forming process. Therefore, the wise extension teacher does not try to reach the majority by presenting related and segregated facts and principles in logical order on the lesson or lecture plan. The psychological approach is the best approach. In this instance the extension teacher analyzes the problem.

He segregates principles and subject matter so that progress in bringing about desired changes will be orderly and logical. He teaches practices, taking one step at a time. Since suggestion is the more potent he depends less upon argument, and uses a variety of means and agencies to hold the idea of a desired change before people. Each means and each agency reiterates and resuggests facts concerning the practice. Each reinforces the other in driving home the idea. This emphasis is placed on teaching practices since the agent is charged with reaching large numbers of people. He can not organize the masses into classes to teach them organized bodies of knowledge and appreciations in a formal way, even if such teaching were correct and desirable. The county agent is not a classroom teacher. Moreover, his contacts with the great masses are not close or long sustained. He is forced to use many chance and indirect contacts and relies upon means and agencies which broadcast and hold an idea before the rural people.

Moreover, these people want facts that they can use now, and not knowledge to store up for the future. They have situations to meet, and problems to solve. The extension agent must be prepared to teach practical solutions for these problems - better practices. Each practice learned makes the individual better fitted by experience and discovery to learn other practices. Gradually he acquires a system of organized knowledge and the proper appreciations and ideals that will help him solve other problems and still further improve his situations. The extension teacher should take the farmer as he is and teach through his experiences with his problems, step by step, practice by practice. This is undoubtedly a better method of teaching.

If the practice is one that will benefit many, the extension agent must so organize his use of extension means and agencies, that certain attitudes are developed in the minds of those he is trying to reach. If this is done, not only will more people be influenced to recognize their problems and adopt suggested practices, but they will incidentally acquire more information, as well as appreciations and ideals. Well-planned extension teaching, therefore, is based upon developing the following attitudes in the minds of the masses, viz., (1) attention; (2) interest; (3) desire; (4) confidence; (5) action, and (6) satisfaction.

These imply that the attitudes, feelings, and reactions of those to be taught are known and understood. Their ruling interests and emotions must be gauged properly. Their habits of thought as well as habits of practice must be appreciated. Their arguments must be foreseen. Only then can the most fitting choice and use be made of appropriate teaching means and agencies. Each means, i.e., each circular letter, news article, poster, slogan, meeting, demonstration, tour, or project leader is chosen and used for the special part the means or agency plays in developing these attitudes. Some are used to win attention and interest. All help to hold the main idea - the better practice - before individuals. Finally they move individuals to adopt the better practice. The ultimate goal is satisfaction with this act. Therefore, the means employed must teach the individual what and how to do, as well as to stimulate his interest. Obviously

the practice must be sound. It must fit a real need. The farmer must be successful with the new practice - get the results anticipated. His success will bring satisfaction. Then will come desire to learn still more.

A few rules which govern the development of these attitudes follow. There is also included a brief list of the means and agencies which may be used to create these attitudes.

Attention. - Repetition, constant repetition, is the first rule in successful extension teaching. This is particularly important in the first stages. Therefore, more frequent and varied use of certain teaching agencies is needed to win the attention of individuals. Motion, contrast, intensity, size, color, all should be employed to win attention and make entry for the idea in the mind-stream of the farmer. The following are especially appropriate:

A T T E N T I O N

Slogans.	Exhibits.
Posters.	Mechanical devices.
Stickers.	Method demonstrations.
Envelope inclosures.	Team demonstrations.
Cartoons.	Pageants, parades.
Pictures.	Mock trials.
Motion pictures.	News stories.
Window displays.	Surveys.

Interest. - Two rules which govern the choice and use of means and agencies to build and sustain interest are:

(1) Give information about the thing.

(2) Create activity toward it.

People become interested in something which they feel will help them meet their needs and difficulties. Choose means therefore which impress people that they have the problem and that the recommended practice will solve it for them. Here, too, some use can be made of argument and reason. Elsewhere reliance is largely placed upon suggestion. Moreover, means and agencies which engage the activity of people should be used early in the teaching effort. The following means and agencies are grouped with relation to the above rules.

I N T E R E S T

(1) Give information about the thing:

Result demonstrations.	Graphs, charts.
Testimonials.	Subject-matter articles.
Records of results.	Bulletins.
Tours.	Circulars.
Meetings.	News items.
Lantern-slide lectures.	

(2) Create activity toward the thing:

Committee work.	Poster, essay, slogan, contests.
Organization.	Debates.
Project leaders.	Plays.
Surveys.	Demonstrators.

Desire. - A desire is a want. To make this want felt and to insure action, proper appeals must be made to feelings and emotions. The farmer must see himself practicing what has been recommended, feel himself in possession of the better stock, and see machinery. Good teaching can help him envision and feel the benefits the new practices will bring him. The following agencies will be found useful:

D E S I R E

A problem of making right appeals.

Exhibits of thing.	Before and after pictures.
Working models.	Honor rolls.
Tours to see thing installed or in operation.	Testimonials.
	Local leadership.
Participate in method demonstrations.	Money saving service.
	Health aids.
Circular letters suggesting benefits.	Samples.
	Results.

Action. - Desire should be followed by action. This implies that when a desire has been created the farmer may quickly and easily satisfy this desire. The seeds, fertilizer, lime, chemicals, machinery, devices, or other necessary supplies and material should be made available locally at reasonable prices. Desire may then be turned into action by training committeemen to take orders for material or stock. Some spread of practice may be obtained by employing trained project leaders who pledge themselves to train a certain number of other people to adopt the practice. Enrollment or intention cards are used with good effect in getting action. These directly or indirectly pledge the signer to adopt the recommended practice. They also serve as a basis for a check on accomplishment and satisfaction, if followed by a survey to learn how much was done by each enrolled, how carefully directions were followed, what results were obtained, and what further help is needed by the individual.

A C T I O N

Service and supply.	Information cards.
Pools.	Reminders.
Committees to take orders.	Honor rolls.
Advertisements.	Quotas and goals.
Enrollment cards.	Project-leader groups.

Satisfaction. - The first concern of the agent should be to see that every cooperator is successful with the new practice. With success comes satisfaction. Whatever the agent can do in follow-up instruction by visits to each cooperator, or through personal letters, phone calls, and service letters will contribute much to make individuals win success with the practice. Seasonal hints and reminders in the form of circular letters and bulletins will also help to sustain interest and develop satisfaction. A word of encouragement and appreciation should also be given whenever possible. Satisfaction may be stimulated by keeping the results obtained before the public. Personal mention in the form of news notes or those who adopted the practice or published honor rolls of those who have enrolled also foster local pride and satisfaction. A meeting of all those who have adopted an important practice for the purpose of discussing results and future needs also works well.

S A T I S F A C T I O N

Results.	Service sheets.
Frequent contacts.	Circulars.
Timely hints.	Bulletins.
News notes.	Farm calls.
Personal mention.	Visits.
Honor rolls.	Phone calls.

Confidence. - The development of confidence must accompany the building of the other attitudes. It should grow in intensity as desire is created, and this is followed in turn by action and satisfaction. A wide use of demonstrations and testimonials from local people will help much. The way in which the agent uses all the agencies, however, is the best measure of the maintenance of confidence. Confidence is a fragile thing. Once lost, it is the more difficult to regain. Therefore, the agent must nurture and safeguard it in every stage of his teaching.

Plans of Work

Well-outlined plans and calendars of work are necessary if the teaching is to be successful. For these plans each means and agency to be used, is listed, and details of how and when these will be used are outlined. Experience shows that no matter how important the practice, nor how fine the vision of method may be, if the method is not outlined so that every small detail has a place, the most effective extension teaching is not done. Above all, the county extension agent, the man on the firing line, must be part of that plan. It must be his problem to work it through for himself.

He needs to feel and see clearly his own responsibility in correctly planning the local application of methods of teaching. Each means and agency, each teaching device must be listed, and the details of how and when these will be used need to be outlined as clearly as a blue print. Without these, continuity and systematic work can not be assured.

The making of such plans of work will be facilitated and much better local plans will result, if the specialist, or a committee of specialists and supervisors of county extension agents, first draw up a basic plan for the district or State as a whole. In this plan, the specialist sketches the whole teaching program for a project listing the important teaching means and agencies, as well as the method of using them. The more working detail the better, for better county plans will result if the specialist first thinks out and plans the teaching scheme for himself.

The following is an outline of the principal steps to be covered in building a plan of work:

(1) Diagnose the problem accurately.

(2) Develop a practical economic solution.

(3) Determine the single practices involved.

(4) Provide a sure and economic supply of seeds, stock, lime, or other material or equipment needed.

(5) Awaken interest of leaders and obtain approval of tentative plans.

(6) Organize and train local leaders.

(7) Survey farms to find names and conditions of farmers who should benefit by adopting the practice.

(8) Choose and plan for the use of the most appropriate means and agencies to attract the attention of those who should be reached with the practice.

(9) Same to develop interest.

(10) Same to create desire.

(11) Same to reenforce above and instill confidence.

(12) Same to obtain favorable action from the number selected as a goal

(13) Measure results obtained in numbers adopting practice.

(14) Choose and plan for the use of the most appropriate means and agencies to maintain satisfaction.

(15) Review results, set new goals for ensuing year, and revise plans.

---- 0 ----